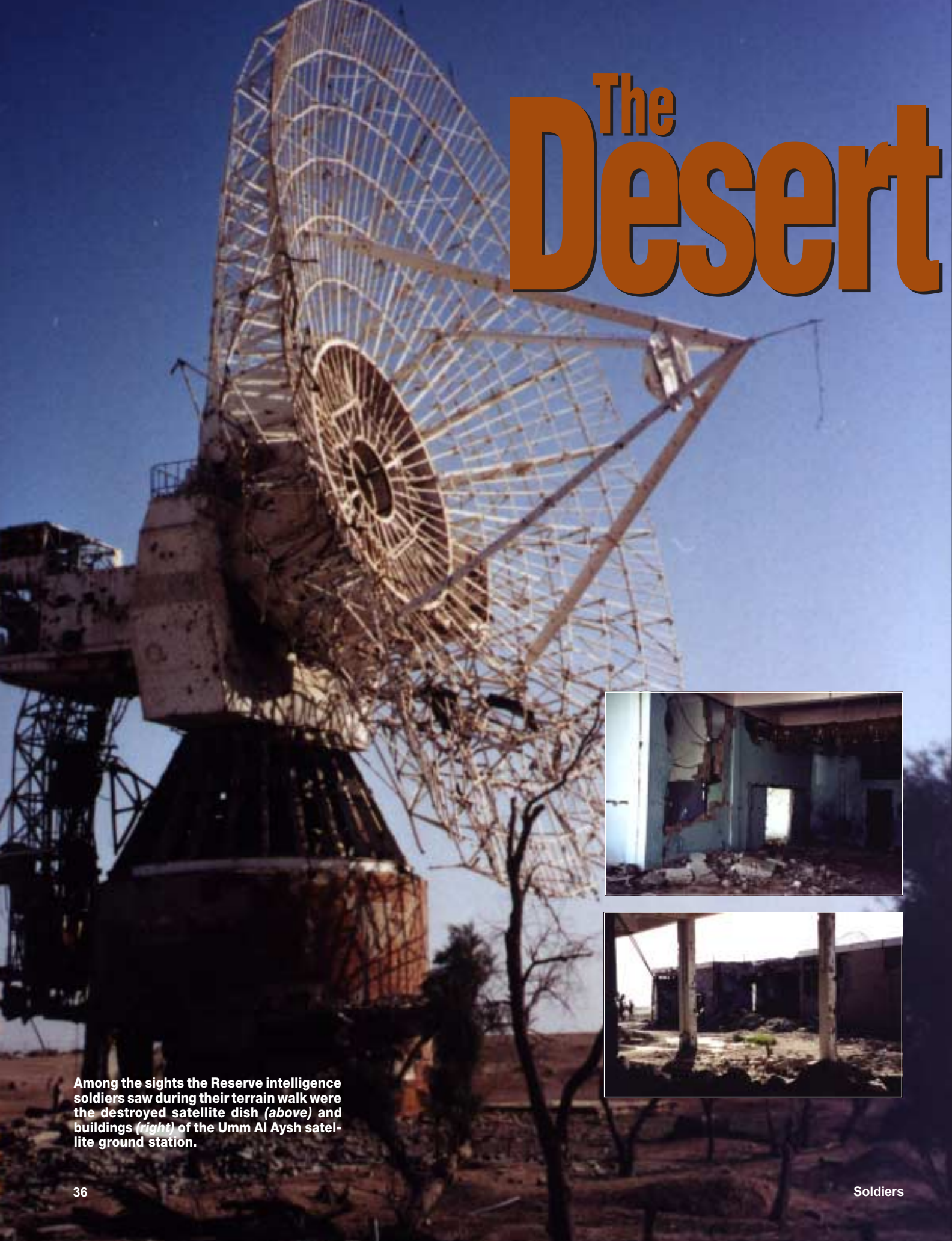


# Soldiers

Online

# The Desert



Among the sights the Reserve intelligence soldiers saw during their terrain walk were the destroyed satellite dish (*above*) and buildings (*right*) of the Umm Al Aysh satellite ground station.

# Classroom

Story and Photos by SFC John F. Berry

**W**HILE recently following in the tracks Saddam Hussein's tanks left in the sands of Kuwait, CPT Susan Archer urged her fellow soldiers to stop their red and silver Suburban so they could photograph some camels.

Seven military intelligence officers and sergeants assigned to the 345th MI Battalion, 81st Reserve Support Group, most based at Fort McPherson, Ga., climbed out of the car and onto the Coastal Highway just north of Kuwait City. A pregnant camel with scruffy brown fur towered over them and stood by patiently as they posed for photographs.

"She was extremely accommodating," Archer said as they resumed their tour of the Kuwaiti desert and key Persian Gulf War battle sites. "No spitting, nothing."

That brief stop provided a lighter moment for the Third Army soldiers who had come to gain valuable knowledge and understanding of this volatile region.

Because terrain influences what armies do, Third Army hosts "terrain walks" to introduce its own to potential battlefields. This journey of the deceptively flat Kuwaiti desert was led by CPT Warren Whitmire.

Third Army is responsible for all U.S. Army units operating in the Middle East.

COL Bill Moore, Third Army's senior intelligence officer, said terrain walks are a requirement for new soldiers. Moore sees a difference in how his people perceive the battlefield

before and after a tour. The experience gives them a better sense of battlefield realities, he said.

The soldiers began their day at Camp Doha, an Army base camp just west of Kuwait City. Their first stop was the Mutla Pass, where the Kuwaiti army reportedly destroyed more than 30 Iraqi tanks on Aug. 2, 1990. Nine years after the attack, the desert sands

have filled in most traces of the Iraqi defenses.

Whitmire pounded the asphalt-tough desert sand with his heel and said the Iraqis used explosives to blow holes that concealed their tanks.

The Suburban churned its way through the Mutla Pass before reaching the Coastal Highway, a hardtop road. MAJ John Archer, sitting next to his

## MIAD May Be Looking For You

**T**HE Military Intelligence Augmentation Detachment officially began in 1992 so the Army could retain MI soldiers who were leaving active duty but were needed for operations that required complicated foreign languages, high-level security clearances and perishable MI skills.

The Atlanta-based Company A, 345th MI Battalion, 81st Reserve Support Group, has 56 soldiers from 20 states who belong to the MIAD. Co. A commander MAJ Greg Dalferes said his unit's readiness would be "significantly" worse without the MIAD, because recruiting locally would delay missions, reduce unit readiness and cost more money.

In other areas of the country, there are five battalions, eight language companies and an imagery company that depend on MIAD to meet their mission requirements.

The MIAD accepts only MI-qualified soldiers from private to captain who live outside of "acceptable commuting distance" from a reserve unit matching their skills. For six weekends a year and up to two weeks of annual training, MIAD pays these soldiers' travel expenses so they can train with their units. On the six weekends they don't travel, the Reservists must find and drill with a local military unit.

If you're an MI soldier leaving active duty but interested in the MIAD program, speak with a Reserve career counselor at your out-processing station. If you're already in the Reserve, you can speak with an Army Reserve recruiter.

For more information, call toll free (800) 359-8483, then 464-8443 to reach MSG Linda Gray, 464-8444 to reach SFC Delois McKinney or 464-8419 to reach SFC Kent Fujiwara. You can also dial commercial (404) 464 and the last four digits of the NCO you want to reach, or dial (DSN) 367 and the last four digits. — SFC John F. Berry

SFC John F. Berry was assigned to Company A, 345th Military Intelligence Battalion, when he wrote this article.



wife, Susan, spotted gaps wide enough in the Mutla Ridge to accommodate tanks, something he said might not show up on a map or computer.

Despite dropping off the world's front pages, Operation Southern Watch continues: Coalition soldiers stand watch in the desert, and warplanes fly over Iraq as part of an effort to make Saddam obey U.N. sanctions.

Since December 1998, when the United States and Great Britain launched Operation Desert Fox, Iraq has banned U.N. weapons inspectors and taken potshots at coalition aircraft.

Next stop for the observers was a tank berm three miles from the border. The Umm Qasr communication towers, just inside Iraq, were clearly visible despite a salty mist blowing off the nearby Persian Gulf. The Suburban then meandered through a chunk of remote desert that the Kuwaitis had converted from sand to soil. The area is lined with dirt berms, built to prevent erosion. But in addition to blocking the wind, the obstacles could also hinder advancing tanks, running counter to the notion that this is wide-open territory.

An hour later, the soldiers were on highway 80, nicknamed "the Highway of Death" after American aircraft destroyed retreating Iraqi units in



**A destroyed Iraqi T-55 tank rests in the "Boneyard," an open-air storage area, home to many vehicles and other types of equipment knocked out during the Gulf War.**

1991. The road is still littered with gouges too numerous to avoid.

They soon reached a sign ordering all American military members to halt. Again, they were only three miles from Iraq. Safwan Mountain, near the airfield of the same name, where the Iraqis surrendered, rose above the desert surface.

Next was Umm Al Aysh, once a significant satellite ground station. Its three dishes and two buildings were now little more than mangled frames and crumbling ruins, another casualty of the war.

Then came the "Boneyard," a remote desert area where thousands of twisted pieces of Iraqi military hardware are lumped together in rows.

"In time, war becomes a distant memory. But this will be as powerful a

reminder as you will ever find," said MAJ Kirby Daras, standing on a berm marking the boundary between soldiers and tanks. "It's not statues or monuments. This is the real thing."

"This trip has shown me that it wasn't a bad thing to be involved in the war," Susan Archer said. "For a short time, the people of Kuwait had lost their country, before we stepped in. If people want to feel good about being in uniform, Kuwait is a real good place to start." □

## A History of Vigilance

**F**ORT McPherson's Third Army has responded with troops and equipment each time Saddam Hussein has threatened Kuwait since the formal end of the Persian Gulf War in 1991. Such deployments — which put unexpected and considerable strain on soldiers and their families — have been an almost annual event. Eventually, these responses grew large enough to earn operational nicknames:

1994: Vigilant Warrior

1995: Vigilant Sentinel

1996: Desert Strike

1997-1998: Desert Thunder I and II

1998: Desert Fox — *SFC John F.*

*Berry*



**American and Kuwaiti flags fly over a camp in the Kuwaiti desert. Two necessities of modern desert life — a satellite dish and basketball hoop — are also visible.**